

THE BROCHURE SERIES OF ARCHITECTURAL ILLUSTRATION.

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APRIL

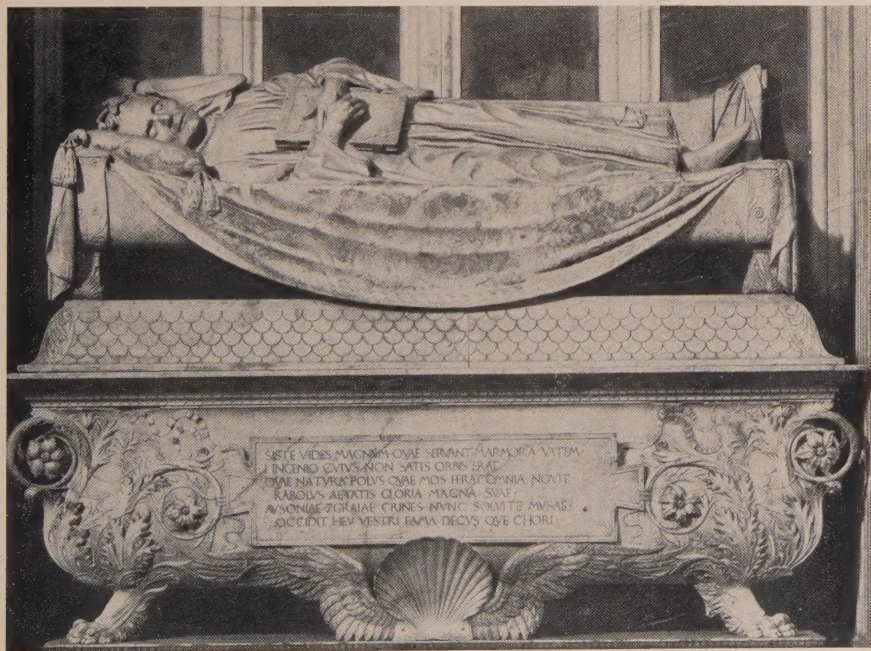
No. 4.

ITALIAN SEPULCHRAL MONUMENTS.

THE type of monument which we know under the name of a sepulchral tomb consists, first of all, of a sarcophagus, which in the more perfect examples is raised upon

phosed into a canopy), which is usually supported by columns or pillars.

The sarcophagus,—the heart and centre of the Christian monument,—originated, no one knows when, in



MARSUPPINI TOMB, FLORENCE

DETAIL

pillars, brackets or a base. Upon this sarcophagus lies a recumbent effigy. The whole is surmounted by a pointed or round arch (sometimes metamor-

Egypt, and the Egyptian, whose religion centred about the preservation of his body after death, invented the shape which has come down to us, with no

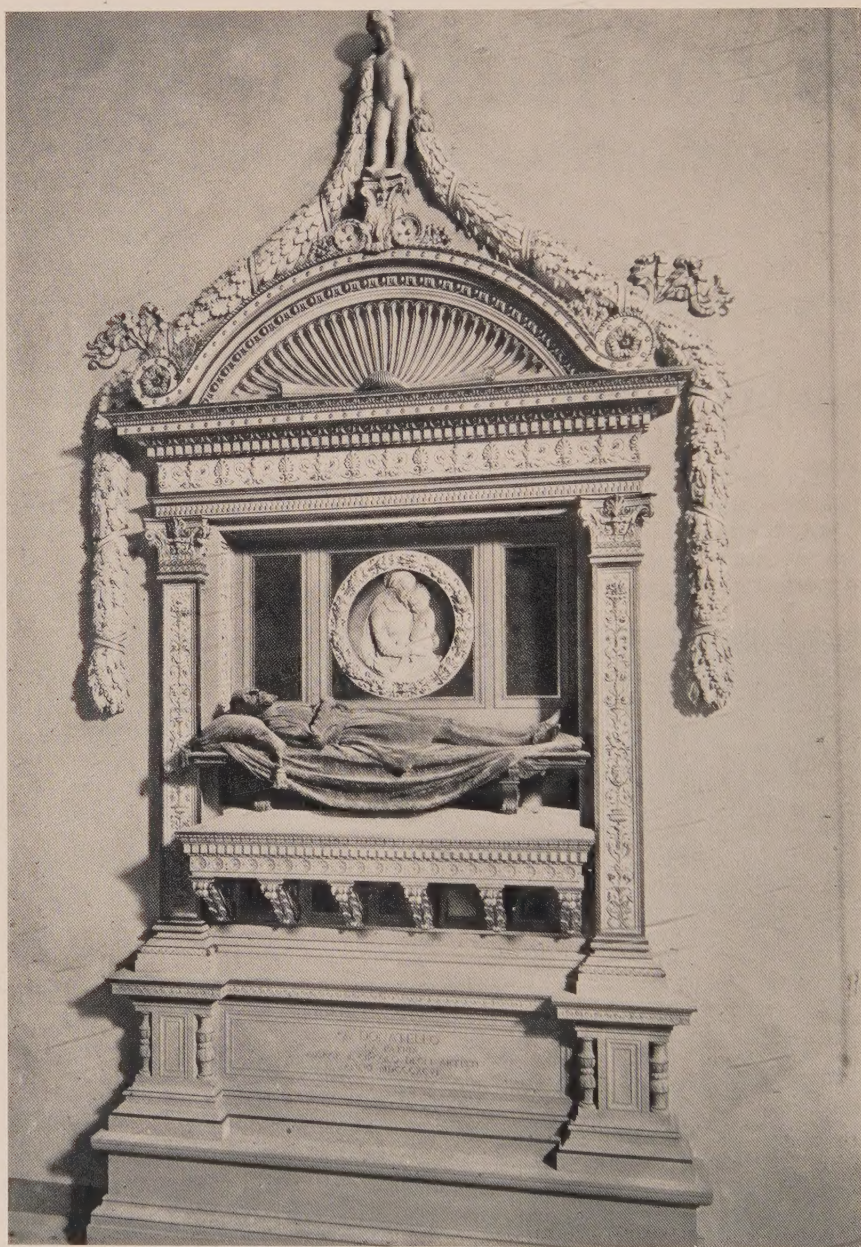


PLATE XXVI

TOMB OF DONATELLO, FLORENCE, 1446

appreciable change. From the Egyptians the sarcophagus was adopted by the Etruscans, from them taken by the Romans, and by the Romans transmitted to the Italians of the middle ages.

From Etruria—the land of tombs—all traces above the earth of her strange original inhabitants have vanished, but below the surface exist countless sepulchral chambers whose contents tell us what manner of men they were, how they ate and drank, what arms and implements they used, and what dresses and ornaments they wore; for the Etruscan carved the massive, dark, secret sarcophagus of Egypt with storied ornaments and bas-reliefs, and, finally, with effigies of the dead. These effigies are of great variety and interest. We find them reclining singly or in pairs, as at a banquet, generally leaning upon the left elbow and holding a festive goblet in the right hand. More rarely, one figure is stretched on the top of the sarcophagus as if asleep. More rarely still, a wedded pair lie clasped in each others' arms. Here, then, we have the clear prototypes of the Roman tombs,—the sarcophagus borrowed from Egypt, the image added by the Etruscans.

The Roman tombs are too well known to require detailed description here; and indeed the Romans did little but to elaborate and perfect the motives thus furnished ready to their hands.

The third typical feature in the sepulchral tomb, the round or pointed arch, was added in early Christian times. The catacombs, which served those poor hunted martyrs as refuges, as churches and at last as burial places, consisted of winding and connecting galleries, with arched roofs. The walls of these passages were divided by superposed rows of oblong sepulchres, in which the bodies of the faithful, wrapped in grave clothes, were laid away, and either hidden from sight by a flat slab of stone, on which a name, a cup or an emblem was engraved, as in the early days of persecution, or enclosed in Roman sarcophagi in the days after the religion was established; for even the richest Roman Christians preferred to rest in death near the burial-places of their saints and martyrs,

and the greater part of early Christian sarcophagi were found in the catacombs.

In this pointed or round-arched recess in the wall of a subterranean passage, which contained a sarcophagus, carved, and it may be bearing an effigy of the dead, we find, thus, the complete germ of the sepulchral monument of later times. Whether the sarcophagus was raised but a little from the pavement or placed high up and corbelled out from the wall such was the general design.

It must be interposed here, however, that if the Christian sculptors borrowed the idea of an effigy from the Romans, they treated it from a very different point of view. The Etruscan and Roman sculptors represented their subjects as alive, either reclining at a banquet or saying the last farewells to their weeping friends, or, in a few rare cases, as sleeping. The mediæval sculptor, however, merged the main idea of using an effigy at all with the thought of the Christian custom of laying out the dead for burial in their most sumptuous attire and of the feudal practice of exposing the bodies so arrayed in halls where, for three days before burial, all could approach them. The Christian effigy, therefore, up to that time of decadence, “when,” as Mr. Ruskin says, “the soul of the sixteenth century dared not contemplate its body in death,” never represents a reclining or sleeping person, but always a dead body, laid out for burial in its most characteristic vestments.

The link between the Roman sarcophagi and those of the middle ages and the Renaissance is of the closest. “The one abiding influence in all modern Italian art has certainly been that of the old Roman architects and sculptors,” wrote Street. “Traces of their handiwork were never far from the eyes of mediæval workmen, and it was not strange that men who were taking the old Roman fragments, and even sarcophagi of actual Roman design and execution for their own use, should at times and in their own works allow themselves to indulge in a somewhat close imitation of these ancient examples. The Roman sarcophagi were either appropriated for Christian tombs or copied with considerable exactness.

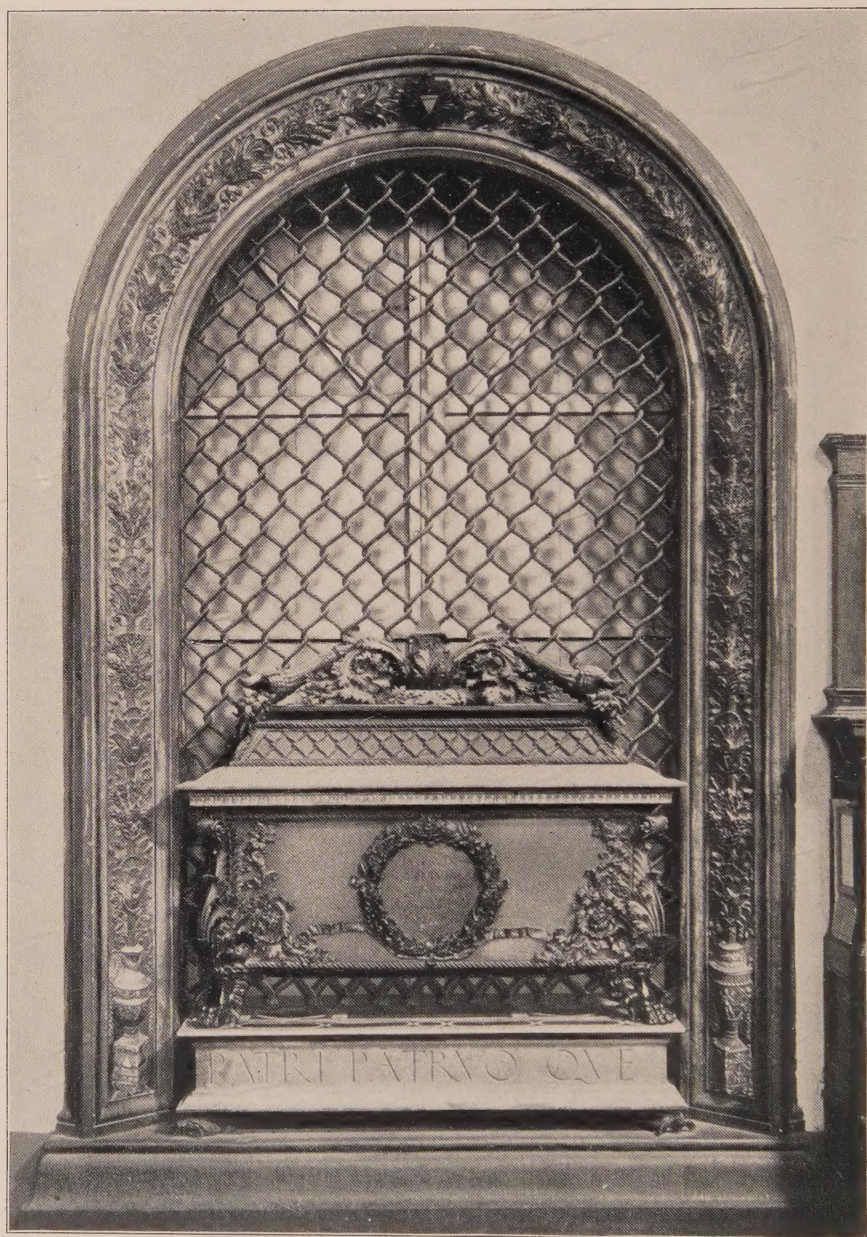


PLATE XXVII

MEDICI TOMB, FLORENCE, BY ANDREA VERROCHIO, 1472

Vitale Faliero was buried in a Roman sarcophagus at the entrance to St. Mark's, Venice, at the end of the eleventh century; another Doge of the twelfth, and yet another of the thirteenth were buried the same way in the strange cloister." It is also important to remember, as Perkins, who quoted the above note, adds, "that this appropriation of Roman sarcophagi for Christian

tombs, was, in early times at least, necessitated by the incapacity of Italian workmen to do any work of their own. Having an abundance of old material available, they made no effort to improve until the supply began to be exhausted, when the use of the chisel might have been altogether abandoned, had not the arrival of many Byzantine workmen led to some improvement. Before the Renaissance there were stone-cutters,

but no sculptors, in Italy, and monuments were sarcophagi of Roman times, or clumsy copies of the same with such rude ornament as the capacity of those who carved them allowed; and Italian sepulchral monuments show a growth from the modest beginnings to a time when technic and taste were alike excellent, and then a decline, through a period when great technical skill was

coupled with ever increasingly meretricious extravagance in form and material."

To trace the gradual growth of the Italian monument from these rude beginnings through the Gothic period, lies outside our present subject. Suffice it to say that, in both Gothic and Renaissance monuments, effigies, sarcophagi and arched recesses are found

as common elements of design, the main difference being in the plastic treatment. Statuettes and bas-reliefs are subordinate features in Gothic tombs, but in those of the Renaissance, which exhibit a much greater breadth of surface available for decoration, both are of primary importance, and the latter especially are treated with the greatest skill and variety, not only in figure but in ornamental subjects. All the elements



MEDICI TOMB, FLORENCE.

DETAIL

of Classic ornament, such as bucrania, festoons, garlands, putti, medallions and the like, were used with effect by the early Renaissance sculptors, who knew how to calculate the degree of relief necessary to produce the greatest variety of surface. Some portions were deeply sculptured so as to cast bold shadows, while others were raised so slightly, and treated with such subtle



PLATE XXVIII

D'ALAGNI TOMB, NAPLES, BY AGNOLO ANIELLO DI FIORE, 1477

gradations, that without the aid of the hand the eye might fail to recognize them. "In Gothic architecture open-work tracery is the staple of ornament: in that of the Renaissance bas-relief takes its place."

The history of Renaissance Italian sepulchral monuments may be conveniently divided into three periods, and these periods may be typified by the influences of three men,—Donatello (1386–1466), Andrea Sansovino (1460–1529), and Michaelangelo (1475–1564). Under the followers of Donatello, the sepulchral tomb rose to its highest point of perfection; with Andrea Sansovino came the decadence; Michaelangelo's influence altogether changed and revolutionized monumental art.

As the type of tomb which we are here considering depended in large measure upon the importance and character of the effigy, it could not come to perfection before the complete emancipation of sculpture, and this emancipation only fully took place with the work of Donatello. Throughout the middle ages and up to his time, sculpture was limited to structural decoration, was strictly connected with and subordinate to architecture. From this state Donatello practically emancipated it by giving the figures with which he filled the niches in some great building self-dependence and individuality. Unfortunately for our present purpose, however, Donatello's work is not best represented by a sepulchral tomb; but the work of his school is excellently typified by a tomb, designed by his most eminent pupil, Desiderio da Settignano, which Perkins calls the most perfect example of Renaissance sepulchro-monumental art. It was erected to Carlo Marsuppini, the Pope's secretary, in 1455, in Santa Croce, Florence, and is shown in the accompanying Plate XXV.

Little is known of the artist. The son of a stone cutter, he was born in 1428. He for a while followed his father's trade, which he soon outgrew, and rapidly developed into a famous sculptor. He died in Florence, aged but twenty-five, in 1453, and an anonymous poet wrote in verses laid upon his tomb:

"Nature, indignant at being outdone by him, cut short his days; but her vengeance proved vain, for he had given immortality to his living marbles and they to him!"

The author of "Tuscan Sculptors" says of the tomb: "Were it not for its perfectly plain panels of dark marble below the architrave, the eye might be fatigued by the extreme richness of the surrounding parts, but, through them, it not only attains a grateful point of rest, but is fixed upon the admirable effigy and the exquisite sarcophagus, in itself a marvel of beauty in form and ornament. The learned Papal Secretary lies with his hands resting on a book placed just below his breast, and his person so inclined as to make it wholly visible from the pavement of the church, whence the strongly marked features, the closed eyes, and the noble forehead can be scanned at ease. Placed within a recess formed by an arch, the sarcophagus is raised on a low platform sculptured with vases and arabesque ornaments. The nude genii at either side of the base of the whole structure are balanced by two other genii placed high up at the sides of the arch. A charming roundel of the Madonna and Child with two praying angels fills the lunette, and both archivolt and architrave are richly ornamented."

Even Mr. Ruskin admits that this tomb is "very fine of its kind," but adds: "The drapery is chiefly done to cheat you, and chased delicately to show how fine the sculptor could chisel it. It is wholly vulgar and mean in cast of fold." (It is hard sometimes not to sympathize with Mr. Henry James when he says that much of Ruskin's writing is pitched in the nursery key, and might be supposed to emanate from an angry governess; "he pushes and pulls his unhappy pupils about, jerking their heads towards this, rapping their knuckles for that, sending them to stand in corners and giving them Scripture texts to copy.")

The five next succeeding plates show, in general, the outworking of the impetus given to the art by Donatello and his pupils. The tomb of Giovanni and Piero di Cosimo de' Medici,



PLATE XXIX

TARTIGNI TOMB, BOLOGNA, BY FRANCESCO DI SIMONE, 1477

in San Lorenzo, Florence (Plate XXVII.), is by Donatello's second most noted pupil, Verrochio, but is included not to show Donatello's influence (and indeed there is so little of his master's influence visible in any of Verrochio's works that his pupilage would be doubted if not so well authenticated), but to give an example of a beautiful type of tomb without an effigy. The sarcophagus is of red porphyry with fine bronze foliated ornament, and the cabling behind the monument is a spec-

Chiara at Monte San Sovino and that when he modelled the tomb of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza (Plate XXXI.). He had eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree, and, becoming self-conscious, had passed over to the ranks of the artists of the sixteenth century,—his works illustrate the change from the old to the new school, and bridge over the gap between them.

"Upon every part of this tomb ornament is lavished, and yet the general effect is monotonous, owing not only



TARTAGNI TOMB, BOLOGNA

DETAIL

imen of the technical perfection of fifteenth century metal-work.

As has been said, the influence of Andrea Sansovino may be considered as marking the beginning of decadence in Renaissance sculpture. "In early Renaissance works," says Perkins, "we lose ourselves, as the architect did his own personality, when, in obedience to the imperious promptings of his nature he modelled them without thought of the praise or censure which they might ultimately receive. That it is which makes the essential difference between the art of the early and that of the late Renaissance,—between the time when Sansovino made the altar at Santa

to its uniformity of treatment, but also to a want of contrast with unadorned spaces as points of repose for the eye. A want of character and individuality marks the statues of the virtues (two seated above the lower entablatures and two standing in niches to the right and left of the sepulchral effigy) whose heads are imitated but not inspired by the antique, and whose bodies are clothed in classically disposed and heavy draperies out of all proportion with their height.

"The most daring innovation made by Sansovino is in his treatment of the sepulchral effigy—as if the prelate which it represents had been momenta-



PLATE XXX

ROCCA TOMB, ROME, 1482

rily overcome by sleep. Leaning upon one elbow he reclines in an attitude which could not be maintained, and is therefore unfit for marble; which is out of harmony with the architectural lines, and is therefore unpleasant to the eye; and which, as violating the beautiful and appropriate Christian tradition which gave to the effigy the solemn and impressive aspect of the body when laid out for burial, is objectionable. We know why the Etruscan and Roman represented the dead upon sarcophagi as if reclining at a banquet with wine-cup in hand, and we know why the Christian adopted a very different mode of representation; but we are at a loss to understand what other ground than novelty for novelty's sake induced Sansovino to break with the past and effect a senseless compromise between the two, which has neither the meaning of the Pagan nor the beautiful fineness of the Christian practice."

In a passage in the "Duchess of Malfi" our English Webster makes the Duchess ask: "Do we grow fantastical in our death-bed? Do we affect fashion in the grave?" And Besola answers her: "Most ambitiously! Princes' images on their tombs do not lie as they were wont, but with their hands under their cheeks (as if they had died of the toothache); they are not carved with their eyes fixed on the stars, but, as their minds were wholly bent upon the world, the selfsame way they seem to turn their faces." And this criticism reads as if Webster might have written it in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo, facing the monument of Cardinal Sforza.

But though this innovation of Sansovino found many imitators, and was the forerunner of many others which even more flagrantly set monumental properties at defiance, he followed the recognized *quattrocento* type in general design. It remained for Michelangelo to break all bounds and revolutionize sacro-monumental art.

The tomb of Cosimo II. de' Medici shown in Plate XXXII.—a beautiful example, less familiar than Michelangelo's Medici monument at San Lorenzo, and even better illustrating the change in style under his influence,

—was designed by Pietro Tacca, a pupil of Gian Bologna, to whom the bronze statue is sometimes attributed. It stands in the Medici Chapel which was built by Ferdinand I. de' Medici with the actual intention of removing thither from Jerusalem the Holy Sepulchre, which he had planned to steal.

Up to the advent of Michelangelo, in both Gothic and Early Renaissance sepulchral monuments the architecture and sculpture had been so combined as to form a unit, each depending upon the other. In the designs of Michelangelo and of his pupils and followers architecture, coldly and unsympathetically used, is used as a mere background for sculptured figures of large size; the sarcophagi are stripped of all the delicate and lovely plant and figure ornament with which the fifteenth century sculptors had been wont to enrich them. The one aim is the glorification of the individual through plastic representation, with no remotest touch of religious feeling.

Brochure Series Competition "N."

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE AWARD.

IN this Competition, for the design of an ornamental seal for the "Woman's Club House Corporation," the seal was intended to be used both officially, on documents, stationery and the like, and in the decoration of the Club House building, which is in the Italian Renaissance style.

The first prize is awarded to Mr. George B. Perkins, 96 Washington Street, Boston; the second prize to Mr. William E. Chamberlin, 27 Clinton Street, Cambridgeport, Mass. The judges were, Mr. C. Howard Walker, instructor in decorative design in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Miss Josephine Wright Chapman, the architect of the Woman's Club House.

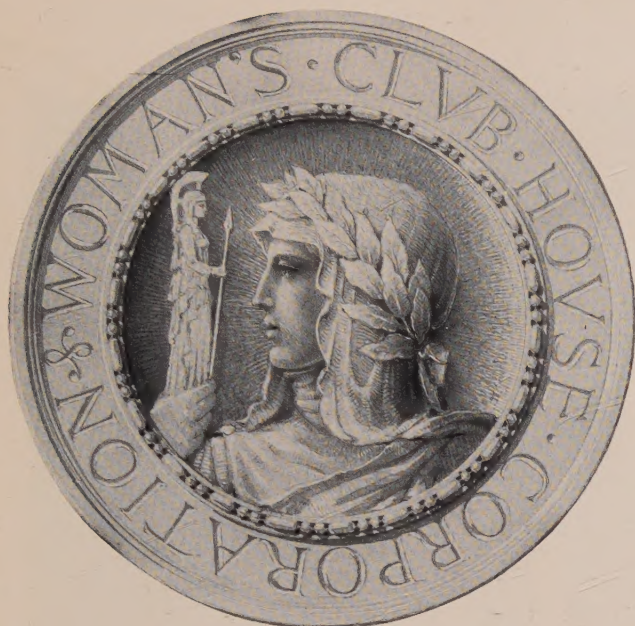
The conditions of the Competition provided that the design need not necessarily attempt to be in any way symbolic or emblematic; but it happened that the two designs which clearly ranked above the others were in some measure, symbolic,—the first representing the head of a laurel-crowned woman holding before her eyes the statue of Pallas Athene; the second having for its central device a distaff on a shield.

It is in its conception rather than in its execution that the first prize design out-



PLATE XXXI

SFORZA TOMB, ROME, BY ANDREA SANSOVINO, 1510



FIRST PRIZE DESIGN

MR. GEORGE B. PERKINS

BOSTON

ranks the second, — a conception not only fine in itself, but one which so well lends itself to decorative expression as to make it effective for the purpose. On the other hand, to properly execute such a conception would require the very highest degree of skill, and for this reason the second prize design would probably prove the more practical for actual use. The faults in execution of the first prize design are obvious enough. The main one is clearly a lack of proper distribution of masses in the central medallion, the lack of a marked axial line, and the consequent irritating sense of not being quite sure in which position the seal should be placed. The drawing of the drapery about the head, too, is weak and ineffective.

The second prize design is well and firmly executed throughout. The relief is clearly indicated, and the sense of stability, owing to the

proper balance of masses, perfect. The lettering in both designs is to be commended.

The most prevalent fault in the other drawings submitted in this Competition was that the designers failed to keep in mind the characteristics which should make a seal design distinctive. Too many of the drawings were merely decorative circles, — it was almost impossible to conceive of some of them being executed in relief at all.

Mentions are awarded to the designs of Messrs. Russell Francis Barker, Hartford, Conn., Charles G. Badgley, Mt. Vernon, N.Y., and Edwin H. Hewitt, Boston.

The announcement of the award in Competition "N," for the lettered cover-page of a treatise on pen-drawing, is announced on the page facing the inside cover of this issue.



SECOND PRIZE DESIGN

MR. WILLIAM E. CHAMBERLIN

CAMBRIDGEPORT, MASS.

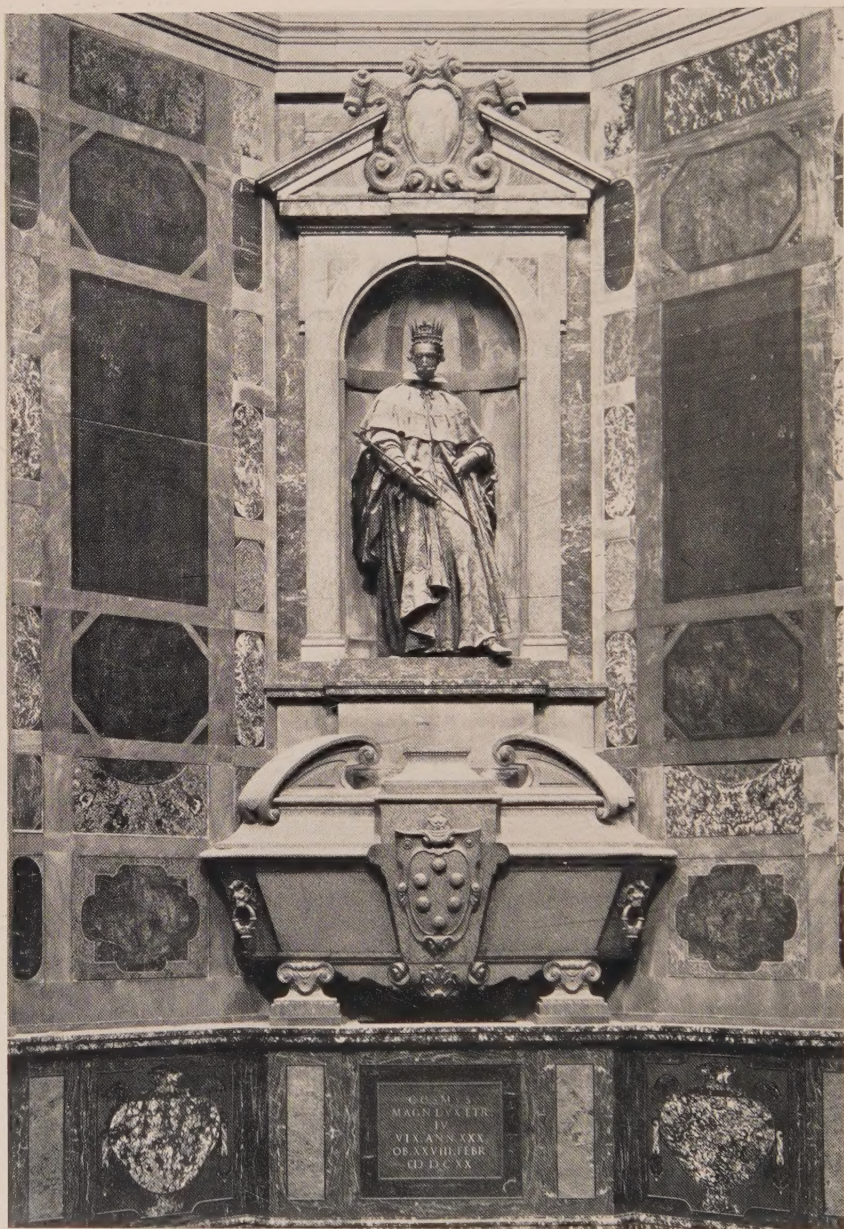


PLATE XXXII

MEDICI TOMB, FLORENCE, BY PIETRO TACCA, 1622

